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Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives

Note by the Secretary-General**

In conformity with General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives. The Secretary-General concurs with the approach to programme monitoring and evaluation described in the report.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.

** The report was delayed because of extensive consultations with departments and offices.

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Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

This report contains a review of evaluation capacity and practice in the Secretariat during the biennium 2002-2003. It also summarizes actions that will be undertaken by the Secretariat in the context of the Secretary-General's agenda for further change, which identified the need to strengthen the system of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to better measure the impact of the Organization's work. The report concludes with proposals for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) to enhance the review of documentation produced within the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle, and presents a choice of topics for future in-depth evaluation.

The overall conclusion of the OIOS review is that evaluation capacity in the Secretariat is sustained by reasonably sound institutional arrangements and evaluation practices which can support further improvements in the short term. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/269, these improvements should focus on a clearer allocation of resources in all sections of the programme budget for 2006-2007 to enable improved performance of monitoring and evaluation activities. In addition, managers need to assess M&E needs, revisit the issue of organizational placement of the evaluation function with a view to clarifying arrangements covering M&E activities in their programmes and allocate appropriate resources and time for these activities. Furthermore, attention needs to be paid to systematic planning of both in-depth and self-evaluation. Clarification of evaluation terminology will also ensure more uniform use. These actions could be effectively undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of programme budgets for the biennium 2006-2007. In addition, a revised timeline and actions are presented with a view to enhancing the availability and use of performance and evaluation information for preparing strategic frameworks for the 2008-2009 biennium.

Pilot activities aimed at the use of self-evaluation in the context of results-based approaches have been instructive in highlighting the need to develop participatory processes and better systems of organizational learning. Review of a sample of reports produced during the biennium demonstrated that evaluations were useful in a variety of ways, even if their coverage was not comprehensive or their results used systematically. Some programmes and projects have set up systems to apply lessons learned. Future evaluations should be more rigorous in their use of baseline data, and go beyond considerations of programme efficiency and effectiveness to assessing whether programme efforts have led to change or verifiable impact.

The report describes five specific actions that are under way in the Secretariat to define roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation, and develop a stronger evaluation capacity within the programmes of the Secretariat. Proposals are also made to modernize the central evaluation function so that it can act as a repository and disseminator of sound evaluation practices and lessons learned. The report also contains two proposals for consideration by CPC to enhance the role of intergovernmental review of results-oriented M&E products.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1	4
II.	Current evaluation capacity and practice in the Secretariat	2–31	4
	A. Institutional arrangements for evaluation	3–8	4
	B. Evaluation practices	9–31	6
III.	Strengthening of results-oriented monitoring and evaluation	32–40	12
	A. Actions by the Secretariat	34–38	12
	B. Support needed from intergovernmental bodies	39–40	14
IV.	Topics for future in-depth evaluations	41–44	15
V.	Conclusions and recommendations	45–49	16
Annex			
	Programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle		18

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the eighth in a series of reports that have been submitted biennially since 1988 to the General Assembly through the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) in accordance with the established regulations.[1] It presents an overview for 2002-2003 of the Secretariat's evaluation capacity, and the application of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives. The report then examines the progress in implementing action 21 (e) of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change",[2] which envisaged a strengthened system of evaluation and monitoring system that will better measure the impact of the Secretariat's work. The report concludes with recommendations on further strengthening of monitoring and evaluation for consideration by CPC and also proposes topics for further in-depth evaluations.

II. Current evaluation capacity and practice in the Secretariat

2. To assess evaluation capacity and practice in the Secretariat, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a survey of 23 programmes of the medium-term plan, of which 20 responded. The survey focused on: (a) existing institutional arrangements (including all resources devoted to the evaluation function); (b) types of evaluations undertaken; and (c) self-evaluation experience. Respondents were also asked for their assessment of the impact of training in using results-based evaluative techniques introduced in 2002-2003, as well as for their suggestions for strengthening the evaluation system. Based on the results of this survey, OIOS concludes that, overall, evaluation capacity in the Secretariat is sustained by reasonably sound institutional arrangements and evaluation practices. However, a number of vulnerabilities, such as disparate resource allocation for evaluation, dissimilar evaluation planning protocols, uneven capacity in evaluation tools and techniques and inconsistent use of evaluation terminology, suggest the need for further improvements.

A. Institutional arrangements for evaluation

3. Three criteria were used for assessing the capacity and strength of the evaluation function in different programmes: existence of a dedicated unit and reporting lines of this unit or those responsible for evaluation; resources allocated for evaluation; and regular planning of evaluation activities. The majority of programmes — 14 out of 20 — have a unit dedicated to evaluation. The remaining six programmes have no consistent organizational structures for managing the evaluation function, but rather try to tailor relevant activities to their specific demands. In terms of reporting lines, in seven programmes the evaluation function is directly supervised by the manager in charge (i.e., the Under-Secretary-General or Executive Director). In the other 13 programmes, the evaluation responsibility is affiliated with programme planning, policy and development studies entities and its reporting lines vary accordingly.

4. Sixteen of the 20 responding programmes provided concrete staffing data. Among these 16 programmes, a total of 82 staff (63 Professional and 19 General

Service staff) are involved in the evaluation function. Only 40 of the 63 Professional staff work full-time on evaluation; 31 of the full-time staff are at P-2 to P-4 levels. Nine staff at the P-5 level have full-time responsibility for evaluation. Four posts at the D-1 level were reported as being involved in evaluation, all on a part-time basis. In regard to the small number of senior staff responsible for evaluation, some programmes are of the view that this is not a serious concern, especially if the evaluation entity reports directly to the head of the programme, while others maintain that for evaluation findings to impact on decision-making, the person responsible for evaluations should be part of the senior management team. OIOS finds more merit in the latter view. Indeed, the seniority of the evaluation manager can be critical in identifying strategic and cross-cutting issues for evaluation and ensuring that evaluations findings are taken seriously by the senior management with a view to informing the key planning decisions and the assessment of results achieved.

5. There is unanimous recognition among respondents that genuine strengthening of monitoring and evaluation activities in the Secretariat is greatly dependent on the leadership, commitment, support and attention given to it by the senior-most managers. OIOS believes that at this juncture, when the strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation system is on the reform agenda, it is imperative for senior managers to take concrete steps to assess monitoring and evaluation (M&E) needs, revisit the issue of organizational placement of the M&E function in their programmes and allocate appropriate resources and time for M&E activity. To enhance its impact, this exercise should be linked to the preparation of budget proposals for 2006-2007.

6. Data on the type and amount of non-staff evaluation costs was not consistently reported by respondents. While 13 responding programmes indicated that they earmarked funds for evaluation, only 7 were able to provide specific dollar amounts. In this connection, it may be relevant to consider resources for central evaluation functions in comparable organizations. For example, the United Nations Development Programme's central evaluation function is allocated $3 million annually and the World Bank's central evaluation department is allocated $20 million annually. The OIOS central evaluation function is allocated $700,000 annually. In most other international organizations, central evaluation entities have sufficient resources for developing evaluation standards, guidelines and training, researching and promoting best practices through learning networks. These other entities also manage a portfolio of evaluation assignments with help from short-term consultants, which allows broader and in-depth coverage of many issues in a shorter time through specialist expertise. In contrast, the Secretariat entities involved in evaluation rarely allocate short-term funds for consultancies, training or developing and sharing of lessons learned.

7. The above pattern reflects the fact that there are currently no clear guidelines in the Secretariat on the appropriate level of resources to be dedicated for evaluation, particularly regarding the regular budget. The urgency of developing such guidelines is underscored by the demands for increased verification, validation, data gathering and analysis in the context of the results-based budgeting and programme performance reporting. These activities require stronger skills in logical framework analysis and indicator measurement on the part of managers and their staff. OIOS believes that developing such guidelines as part of the 2006-2007 budget instructions to be issued in 2004, could be a first step in implementing the

request of General Assembly resolution 58/269 to ensure that resources are clearly identified in all sections of the proposed programme budget for the performance of the monitoring and evaluation functions.

8. The established rules require programme managers to prepare evaluation plans regularly.[3] The survey requested information on whether evaluation plans were prepared for 2002-2003. If no plan was prepared, a follow-up question asked for details on how programmes decided on evaluation topics and scheduled evaluations. Of the 20 programmes, 8 had evaluation plans (it is noteworthy that 7 of these have an evaluation unit). Most of the programmes without formal evaluation plans had a variety of arrangements for scheduling evaluations: decisions by intergovernmental bodies on annual evaluation themes; response by evaluation staff to suggestions from programme managers and to recommendations of oversight bodies; and reliance on self-evaluation activities geared to the results-based budgeting process. OIOS believes that these varied approaches to scheduling evaluations — from formal plans to ad hoc exercises — should be streamlined and systematized. OIOS plans to issue in 2004 clear and practical guidelines on evaluation planning and execution in conjunction with the 2006-2007 budget instructions (see para. 7 above).

B. Evaluation practices

9. It is an established requirement that all programmes shall be evaluated on a regular, periodic basis; to that end six categories for classification of evaluation were envisaged,[4] namely in-depth, internal, ongoing, ex-post and external evaluations, along with self-evaluations. Responses to the OIOS survey provided information on 134 evaluations that were conducted in 2002-2003. The breakdown by type was: 37 in-depth evaluations; 36 project evaluations; and 61 "other" types of evaluations. Thirty-five of the 61 "other" evaluations were described as programme evaluations, institutional and operational evaluations or self-evaluations.

10. The survey responses illustrate that programmes do not consistently use the same nomenclature for classifying evaluations which indicates that the terminology used for evaluations needs to be clarified. A uniform nomenclature of the types of evaluation and the focus and classification of evaluation in terms of the party responsible for the activity is required. A joint task force of staff from monitoring and evaluation units will be set up by OIOS to produce a comprehensive glossary of evaluation terminology that should become uniform and standard throughout the Secretariat.

11. During the previous biennium, 30 per cent of requests for evaluation were from Member States; 32 per cent were requested by programme managers; and 38 per cent of all requests for evaluations came from other parties. In terms of implementation, 29 per cent of all evaluations were conducted by programme managers; 30 per cent by external experts; 6 per cent by Member States; 9 per cent by the OIOS; 1 per cent by the Joint Inspection Unit; and 25 per cent of them were conducted by other parties. OIOS believes that the multitude of actors involved in evaluations ensures a healthy diversity of expertise and vantage points that enriches the evaluation capacity of the Secretariat.

12. In order to assess how evaluations are used in the Secretariat, OIOS selected and examined 39 different evaluations that reflected a variety of approaches to

evaluation. Summarized below are highlights and key features of the products and processes of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Department of Public Information (DPI) that are, in the OIOS assessment, among the better evaluative practices.

13. An example of a comprehensive and systematic examination of programme performance is UNEP's evaluation report for 2002, which focused on its three principal subprogrammes and which also covered project-level evaluations. It had lessons learning sections, and recommendations for enhancing organizational learning through knowledge management and sharing best practices. The report was presented to UNEP's Governing Council to facilitate its deliberations on what the programme has learned and how that knowledge should inform its near- and longer-term plans.

14. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has developed a three-year evaluation plan and management response matrices for follow-up to its evaluations. The evaluation plan sets a good example with emphasis on the effectiveness in achieving results, documenting lessons learned, promoting institutional learning and aiming at greater accountability in the use of resources. The management response matrices contain evaluation recommendations, managers responsible for their implementation and the relevant milestones and deadlines. OIOS believes this practice deserves to be emulated by other departments.

15. UNCTAD submitted its programme assessment 2002-2003 to the Trade and Development Board (TDB). It is notable that the assessment report for 2000-2001 was used as a basic document for mid-term review by TDB, midway between UNCTAD X and UNCTAD XI. Both reports follow the logical framework established in the biennial budgets and serve as reference material to UNCTAD stakeholders on the results achieved during the period as well as a guide to the secretariat in application of the lessons learned with a view to enhancing the delivery of mandates. A number of thematic or programme evaluations and summaries of project evaluations are also submitted for TDB's consideration. Many of the evaluated projects are regional or global, and their implementation bears strongly on overall results achieved by UNCTAD. Currently, judgements about their effectiveness are often made in terms of activities carried out and outputs produced. OIOS believes that it would have been beneficial to make more pronounced emphasis on using indicators reflecting the impact of these activities, both in the near term and mid-term. This approach is more visible in evaluations of projects under the capacity-building programme on trade environment and development, which use a set of objectively verifiable results indicators, thus establishing the basis for future analyses of effectiveness and impact.

16. The evaluations provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights focused on project-level issues. Some of these evaluations considered the cost-effectiveness of what had been done, thereby enhancing their quality. The material also contained a global review of the Office's technical cooperation programme. It consisted of a combination of thematic and country studies. The thematic studies looked into the different interventions in specific areas in a number of country projects while the country studies looked at

the Office's interventions in a specific country over time and covered several project interventions. The country and thematic studies were carried out by different evaluators who were coordinated by a group which was responsible for putting together a synthesis report. Translating its conclusions into "lesson learned" could enhance the impact of such analyses. The Office sample reaffirms the point that a mix of different types of evaluations at programme, subprogramme and project levels allows assessing more comprehensively the overall effectiveness and impact of a programme and results in a wider range of more relevant lessons learned.

17. In ESCAP, evaluation of its publications focused on their impact on end-users. Based on these end-users' feedback, measures were proposed to enhance the quality and usefulness of publications and to improve the planning, production and dissemination processes. The proposals were endorsed by the Commission. Among other ESCAP evaluative material, some reports, such as evaluations of the Asian highway project, stood out in terms of making emphasis on assessing effectiveness and impact in a longer term perspective with a view to assisting managers with future programme design.

18. The evaluations provided by the Department of Public Information focused mostly on the assessment of the quality of services delivered based on responses from end-users to questionnaires. Some of these evaluations also aimed to capture and analyse data on the longer-term effects of the Department of Public Information activities such as progress in shaping global public opinion about the United Nations, or strengthening relationship with various segments of civil society. OIOS believes that such evaluations of external partnerships should be given wider application by other programmes with a view to assessing the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts.

19. A few observations have emerged from the review of submissions received in response to the OIOS questionnaire. One is that evaluations done in the last biennium were useful in a variety of ways, even if their coverage was not comprehensive nor their results used systematically. Some programmes and projects have been examined intelligently, while some programmes have set up systems to apply the lessons learned.

20. Another observation is that most of the 39 evaluation reports reviewed focused on the issues of implementation, resource mobilization and follow-up. Assessments of effectiveness were mostly in terms of immediate or short-term outcomes such as numbers of positive reactions to publications produced and numbers of trainees that expressed, through a follow-up questionnaire, satisfaction with training provided. However, insufficient use was made of baseline data, and progress was not always assessed in relation to established benchmarks. While this kind of assessment of effectiveness is a relevant and a necessary first step in performance assessment, to make an evaluation comprehensive, it is necessary to factor in the programme and subprogramme objectives, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement, baselines and targets as the standard against which relevance, effectiveness and impact should be assessed.

21. Yet another observation is the lack of consistency between the accomplishments reported for some of the programmes in the programme performance report[5] and the results of evaluations and self-evaluation of the same programmes. OIOS believes that more attention should be given by departments and offices to ensuring close correlation between the results of evaluations of

programmes and how programme performance is being reported, integrating both in the monitoring and evaluation system.

22. OIOS also observed the need to gear the design of evaluations to a specificity of outputs, services and results that a particular programme delivers. While some programmes emphasize advocacy and facilitate global norm-setting, others foster international commonality in gathering, interpreting and analysing socio-economic data, while still others focus mainly on support services. Such diversity calls for flexibility in evaluation approaches and techniques that take account of the differences in objectives, expected accomplishments and outputs of various programmes.

23. Self-evaluation is a very important component of the overall evaluative activities of the Organization. In terms of its use by programme managers, 19 of the 20 programmes responding to the OIOS survey indicated that they had conducted self-evaluation exercises during the biennium. The major obstacles to conducting self-evaluation were identified as a lack of commitment from programme managers, shortage of time and resources, and the need for further guidance, training and monitoring of programme implementation. In terms of the value of self-evaluation, it was seen as useful in improving policy and programme design through helping the programme manager to gain perspective. It also catalysed rethinking basic assumptions, provided an avenue to better understand the clients' needs and facilitated participation, clarity and commitment from all levels of staff. Programme managers found these aspects of self-evaluation particularly useful when establishing goals for the next programme plan.

24. Regarding self-evaluation, CPC requested that enhanced self-evaluation support should be provided by OIOS and that this current biennial report should provide an account of progress.[b] OIOS considers the reporting of accomplishments by programme managers under the results-based paradigm and the conduct of self-evaluations as two complementary exercises. This approach was the point of departure in OIOS' promotion of self-evaluation. Key activities undertaken in this regard are discussed below.

25. Starting in September 2002, OIOS carried out activities aimed at updating the conceptual framework for self-evaluation. The aim was to clarify the role of self-evaluation in the context of results-based budgeting, and the outcome was the formulation of the key criteria for self-evaluation. These criteria provided that self-evaluation: (a) is planned, systematic and has a defined scope and timeline; (b) is an essential factor of support to the logical framework of each subprogramme in the biennial budget; (c) is conducted by managers whose use of self-evaluation enables them to periodically take stock of and reassess the assumptions implicit in their logical frameworks; (d) assesses progress and results at the subprogramme level; (e) draws on regular monitoring and ongoing learning, includes consideration of all relevant evaluations and feedback from end-users; and (f) takes account of external factors that have influenced the achievement of results by a subprogramme. These criteria were shared with monitoring and evaluation focal points in all programmes in mid-2003 and were built into the IMDIS-supported performance reporting.

26. In order to test and validate these criteria by practice, OIOS undertook two self-evaluation pilot projects in 2003 with a view to using the lessons learned from these pilots for fostering self-evaluation in 2004-2005. The key objective of the pilot projects was to demonstrate and document the ways in which programme

managers use self-evaluation in meeting their needs regarding the internal assessment of programme effectiveness and impact, efficiency gains and periodic stocktaking of progress. The first involved a pilot with the Department of Public Information and provided an example of how self-evaluation could be customized to the specific needs of a department. The second pilot explored ways of incorporating self-evaluation as part of a Secretariat-wide effort to train and guide programme managers during the latter part of 2003, as they compiled their programme results for the programme performance report for 2002-2003.

Pilot 1.
Introducing a culture of evaluation: supporting the Department of Public Information in conducting its first annual programme impact review

27. In 2002, the Department of Public Information embarked on a comprehensive programme of reforms. This involved a new mission statement, organizational restructuring (including rationalizing its network of United Nations information centres), and the introduction of a strategic approach to its promotional efforts by defining the Secretariat departments as "clients" and instituting a new client planning process. Self-evaluation is an integral component of the Department's "new operating model" and the basis for a three-year cooperative project with OIOS.

28. In the first year of this pilot exercise, OIOS' role was to support the Department in its effort to introduce an annual programme impact review (APIR) as a means to systematically begin evaluating its key products and activities. APIR employs a results-based framework similar to that of the programme budget, incorporating self-evaluation in the daily work of programme managers. OIOS' participation began in February 2003 and helped establish a methodological framework and action plan for APIR, which was piloted in a single division in DPI and then replicated across the Department. The first APIR exercise took place in January 2004.

29. The key conclusions of the first year of this pilot, drawn from a joint OIOS/Department of Public Information assessment done in February and March 2004, are as follows:

(a) *Self-evaluation can be used to help align goals and facilitate internal assessments*. Through a series of facilitated discussions, programme managers identified and validated both departmental and divisional goals. They then used this framework to identify key activities/products and define indicators and measures for use in their self-evaluation activities. By the end of 2003, the Department had formulated 170 performance indicators, captured in a database for internal use by programme managers, to help track and assess their activities. Furthermore, by the January 2004 APIR exercise, programme managers had collected baseline data on two thirds of these indicators. A foundation has therefore been established to ensure systematic monitoring which will yield information of value for the annual self-evaluation exercises in the future;

(b) *APIR processes are best planned in distinct phases*. These phases should cover formulation, internal self-evaluation discussions, selection of best practices and lessons learned, and presentation of lessons learned in a forum of senior managers. In the Department of Public Information, the APIR took the form of an internal meeting of all senior Department staff, chaired by the Under-Secretary-

General. It considered presentations on the Department's response to the crisis in Iraq; results of Dag Hammarskjöld Library surveys among users of its services and training programmes; on the design and launch of the Department's client planning process; and improvements of United Nations information centre work plans;

(c) *A stocktaking phase is a crucial step when introducing a new form of self-assessment*. The final phase of the 2003 APIR process was a series of stocktaking sessions, facilitated by OIOS, to capture experiences, both positive and negative. Among the conclusions of this exercise were the following: (i) exercises to align departmental goals with divisional and section goals were crucial in identifying both key activities/products and performance measures at the section level; (ii) the identification of a "best practice" (i.e., outcome that is associated with replicable success) and a "lesson learned" (i.e., an outcome that is less satisfactory and poses a challenge), requires further attention; (iii) the database for performance indicators was a useful compilation of information but required refinement in order to make it a monitoring tool; and (iv) the APIR process provided a useful opportunity for staff to reflect on the year's activities. These lessons were used in planning the 2004 APIR, which began in April 2004 as a continuation of the cooperative agreement between OIOS and the Department;

(d) *Alignment of APIR with key elements of the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle should be pursued*. There is scope to further rationalize and streamline these processes which would ensure more coherence and save staff time.

Pilot 2.
Updating and using self-evaluation as a way of defining results

30. The second pilot activity was aimed at the incorporation of self-evaluation concepts and practices into the programme managers' input to the programme performance report for 2002-2003. This was done by emphasizing self-evaluation as part of the assessment process undertaken by programme managers in preparing their accomplishment accounts and statements of accomplishment. Self-evaluation within the results-based framework, based on all indicators of achievement and invoking other relevant sources of evaluation information, was introduced in the training provided to all programme managers during the last two quarters of 2003.

31. Key conclusions of this pilot were:

(a) The OIOS training enhanced the role of self-evaluation as an integral part of results-based performance assessment by helping programme managers to build a cogent account of accomplishments based on data gathered and formulated through participatory self-evaluation meetings of managers and staff of each subprogramme. The value of these meetings was that they went beyond the customary stocktaking of activities and examined the original assumptions implicit in the programmes' logical framework; assessed progress in terms of the indicators of achievement; and discussed the results that had been achieved during the biennium and the lessons learned that could be applied to future programming;

(b) The introduction of "accomplishment accounts" and "accomplishment statements" in preparing the latest programme performance report provided an opportunity to foster the "learning" aspects of self-evaluation. Experience indicates that there is a considerable scope for further developing organizational learning and

knowledge management capacity through self-evaluation and performance assessment. There appears to be a solid foundation to build on: programme managers demonstrated tangible progress in mastering the results-based approach by having provided accomplishments reports that transcend mere implementation of outputs and are increasingly framed in terms of verifiable, qualitative statements of progress and change based on indicators and reliably collected, consistent data.

III. Strengthening of results-oriented monitoring and evaluation

32. As part of his agenda for further change,[7] the Secretary-General identified the need for a strengthened system of evaluation and monitoring to better measure the impact of the Organization's work and to ensure that programme performance and evaluation will have a practical impact on future plans and resource allocation. Subsequently, areas that required specific attention were identified:[8] (a) to improve the timeliness of performance reporting so that there is a clearer link between results assessment by programme managers and the preparation of new plans and budgets; (b) to ensure that the Secretariat and intergovernmental bodies devote more time to assess results achieved and evaluation findings; (c) to ensure enhanced consideration by intergovernmental and expert organs of evaluation reports; (d) to ensure that evaluations provide broader and more diverse coverage and tackle issues of relevance and impact; and (e) to earmark resources to improve the practice of self-evaluation as well as ensure better use of evaluation findings. Efforts within the Secretariat to reform evaluation have been guided by General Assembly resolutions 57/300, in which the Assembly welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the system of evaluation and monitoring, and 58/269, in which it urged the Secretary-General to improve the format and timing of programme performance and evaluation reports, and to ensure that resources are clearly identified in all sections of the proposed programme budget for the performance of the monitoring and evaluation functions.

33. In implementing this strategy, a working group was convened by OIOS with eight other departments and programmes. The working group has developed two clusters of proposals: (a) actions to be taken by the Secretariat to strengthen M&E and (b) suggestions for support needed from intergovernmental bodies, including CPC.

A. Actions by the Secretariat

34. **Action 1**. To enhance the use of programme performance and evaluation information for planning:

(a) Programme managers will be requested to conduct a preliminary performance assessment at the subprogramme level for the current biennium (2004-2005) in the last quarter of 2005, prior to formulating their strategic frameworks for the biennium 2008-2009 (which will be done in December 2005/January 2006). OIOS will provide comments on these preliminary assessments to facilitate managers' consideration of results achieved so that lessons learned will be taken into account in formulating the strategic plans for 2008-2009. The preliminary performance assessment to be undertaken in the last quarter of 2005 should reflect consideration by programme managers of their self-evaluations of activities

undertaken during the 2004-2005 biennium, and should also draw on information, findings and recommendations contained in other evaluations conducted during the same period. It is envisaged to maintain this timetable for the future with appropriate adjustments based on lessons learned from the first exercise. The chart contained in the annex presents the timing of the activities as well as the links within the context of the overall budgeting cycle;

(b) The role of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) in management and performance monitoring will be enhanced through designing its new version around the needs of programme managers, ensuring that the user community guides its design and makes it more user-friendly. To ensure this, an effective means for receiving users' feedback and discussing new IMDIS features will be set up and adequate funding will be sought in the 2006-2007 budget for the development of IMDIS.

35. **Action 2**. To ensure that leadership, commitment, support and attention are provided by senior managers to M&E:

(a) An annual stocktaking/self-evaluation process (along the lines of the APIR exercise piloted by the Department of Public Information and discussed earlier) should become common throughout the Secretariat to strengthen the learning from performance. Highlights and key results of these self-evaluations will be reflected in the annual programme management plans and compacts presented to the Secretary-General;

(b) The recruitment, selection and assessment of programme managers at the P-5 level and above should reflect the requirement for competencies in M&E skills and responsibilities for the use and application of M&E findings and recommendations. All managers will ensure that individual PAS work plans specifically identify M&E goals and activities which will be subject to subsequent appraisal;

(c) Training needs analysis to help define a new M&E skills training programme will be undertaken by the Office of Human Resources Management, with the involvement of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, OIOS and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2004. Such training will be developed and introduced in 2005 so that current and new appointees can develop/refresh their knowledge of logical frameworks and M&E concepts. Completion of this training in M&E skills will be made compulsory for those promoted to positions at the P-5 level and above.

36. **Action 3**. To upgrade evaluation resources and planning:

(a) Budget instructions for 2006-2007 will require managers: to provide information on the self-evaluation systems in place within their programmes and self-evaluation activities conducted in the last biennium; to describe how the results of self-evaluations have been used; and specify resources to be used for self-evaluation in 2006-2007;

(b) Programme managers will be requested to prepare biennial evaluation plans that cover both external and self-evaluation activity for the biennium 2006-2007.

37. **Action 4**. To make evaluation methodology and practice more coherent, clear and consistent, a joint task force comprising representatives from the Department of

Management, OIOS and evaluation offices of the programmes will develop, by fall 2004, a glossary of recommended common evaluation terminology and guidelines on evaluation planning to be released in conjunction with budget instructions (see para. 8 above). A handbook on common evaluation policies, procedures and standards, including a variety of evaluation reporting formats aimed at satisfying diverse needs of different stakeholders, will be developed in 2005.

38. **Action 5**. To strengthen the central evaluation capacity in line with the existing regulations,[9] a more intensive cooperation and collaboration of departments and offices with a more effective central facility which would facilitate such cooperation and collaboration is required. Such a central facility should develop and update standards and training materials; oversee, organize and facilitate training; act as a clearing house for the Organization-wide evaluation activities and as a repository and disseminator of best practices. It is expected to have a strong analytical and methodological capacity to address lessons learned in monitoring and evaluation areas throughout the Secretariat and recommend relevant actions. Towards this end, it is envisaged that appropriate provision will be made in the OIOS 2006-2007 budget for this central evaluation facility within the limitations of the overall resource growth policy.

B. Support needed from intergovernmental bodies

39. **Suggestion 1**. To improve the linkages between the review of past programme performance and assessments of future strategic framework, the CPC could consider:

(a) Adopting the simultaneous review of the programme performance report and strategic framework as an established practice. While this does not solve the problem of a biennial gap in performance information (i.e., the current programme performance report covers 2002-2003, while the strategic frameworks cover 2006-2007), this approach has merit since plans are generally formulated at a strategic level and expected accomplishments do not change dramatically from biennium to biennium. This simultaneous review by CPC will also give programme managers an opportunity to relate their achievements to the presentations of their proposed strategic frameworks to CPC;

(b) Identifying essential issues emanating from the review of the two documents (e.g. the overall design of programmes, merits of indicators used, etc.), for more in-depth reviews in June 2005 to enable CPC to provide guidance to the Secretariat before programmatic preparations are initiated for 2008-2009;

(c) Adopting a decision requesting the Secretary-General to task relevant programme managers with producing reviews of any issues that emanate from CPC's scrutiny of the programme performance report and strategic frameworks, in time for its next session in June 2005.

40. **Suggestion 2**. At present, the CPC deliberations do not have the benefit of the views and recommendations of other legislative and specialized intergovernmental bodies on various evaluation reports pertaining to relevant substantive areas. CPC should consider asking intergovernmental bodies overseeing substantive programmes and subprogrammes to do the following:

(a) Examine, as a matter of course, future objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement of the Secretariat entities under their purview and provide CPC with their considered views, rather than simply "noting" relevant reports;

(b) Establish "programme assessment" as a standing item on their agendas and review progress in implementing envisaged results and appraisals that have been made;

(c) Create subcommittees (or some other arrangements adapted to the needs of the entity concerned) to enable more in-depth deliberations on reports. These subcommittees could then feed their findings and recommendations to the specialized intergovernmental body.

IV. Topics for future in-depth evaluations

41. Since the late 1990s, this report has also become the means for OIOS to propose topics for its future in-depth evaluations. The considerations that led to proposals for 2006-2007 are explained below.

42. The following programmes have not been the subject of in-depth evaluation since 1994: Protection of and assistance to refugees; Political affairs; Peaceful uses of outer space; Human rights; Trade and development; Economic and social development in the regions; Africa: New Agenda for Development; Least developed countries; and Management and central support services. It should be noted that the work of the Management and central support services programme has in the past been reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Similarly, the programmes Peaceful uses of outer space, Human rights and Trade and development have been the subject of comprehensive management reviews by OIOS over the last three years, while the programme Protection of and assistance to refugees is currently the subject of a review by the Joint Inspection Unit.

43. Since CPC has agreed previously to the OIOS proposal for scheduling one in-depth evaluation each year, the schedule of in-depth evaluations for CPC review in 2006 and 2007 might include the following options:

(a) Social development and poverty alleviation — the Secretariat-wide evaluation;

(b) Political affairs;

(c) Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(d) United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development;

(e) Information and communication technology; infrastructure, transport and tourism; regional subprogrammes.

44. In a separate report (E/AC.51/2004/2), OIOS proposes three possible themes for a pilot thematic evaluation to be decided by CPC at its forty-fourth session for consideration at its forty-fifth session.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

45. The strengthening of monitoring and evaluation envisaged by the Secretary-General should include addressing the following key issues by programme managers: (a) ensuring that the organizational placement and arrangements for the evaluation function is revisited in each programme; (b) establishing the practice of evaluation results being reviewed by senior management; (c) identifying resources for carrying out monitoring and evaluation function in all sections of the proposed programme budget for 2006-2007; and (d) ensuring that evaluation plans are prepared for each programme along with the proposals for the 2006-2007 budget. To support this, OIOS will issue guidelines on evaluation planning in conjunction with the 2006-2007 budget instructions and will lead the production of a glossary of evaluation terms to be used uniformly in the Secretariat.

46. To help both managers and Member States assess results and use lessons learned when making decisions on future plans, a revised timeline of activities has been developed to enhance the availability and use of programme and performance evaluation for planning and budgeting. This involves the preparation of preliminary performance assessments by programme managers in the last quarter of the biennium prior to their formulation of strategic frameworks at the end of the biennium (see para. 34 above and annex).

47. Programme managers should aim to emulate the following best evaluation practices: (a) emphasizing the reliance on baselines, benchmarks, performance measures and other qualitative indicators in carrying out evaluation; (b) formulating lessons learned based on evaluation findings; (c) drawing up action plans for follow-up on lessons learned, with concrete responsibilities and deadlines; (d) incorporating lessons learned into training activities; (e) monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations and assigning accountability for it.

48. Pilot projects undertaken during the last biennium to integrate self-evaluation into the results-based framework have yielded instructive lessons. These include the importance of using self-evaluation by programme managers as a planned and systematic activity, with a defined scope and timeline, to support effectively the monitoring of, and reporting on, programme performance under the results-based paradigm. The effectiveness of self-evaluation in this context is greatly enhanced when managers and staff collectively examine problems encountered and identify remedial measures. Consistent efforts should be made to foster an evaluation culture which stresses learning from both positive and negative outcomes and translates such learning into action.

49. **The Committee for Programme and Coordination may wish to:**

(a) **Note the five actions being taken by the Secretariat as outlined in paragraphs 34 to 38 above;**

(b) **Endorse the proposals presented in paragraphs 39 and 40 above;**

(c) **Review the information contained in paragraphs 41 to 44 above and recommend the in-depth evaluations for consideration by the Committee in 2006 and 2007.**

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] Regulation 7.4 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME — ST/SGB/2000/8 of 19 April 2000).

[2] A/57/387.

[3] PPBME Rule 107.2 (b) (iii).

[4] See PPBME Rule 107.2 (a) and the definitions of evaluation types in the "Glossary" on page 16 of PPBME, respectively.

[5] A/59/69.

[6] A/57/16, para. 253.

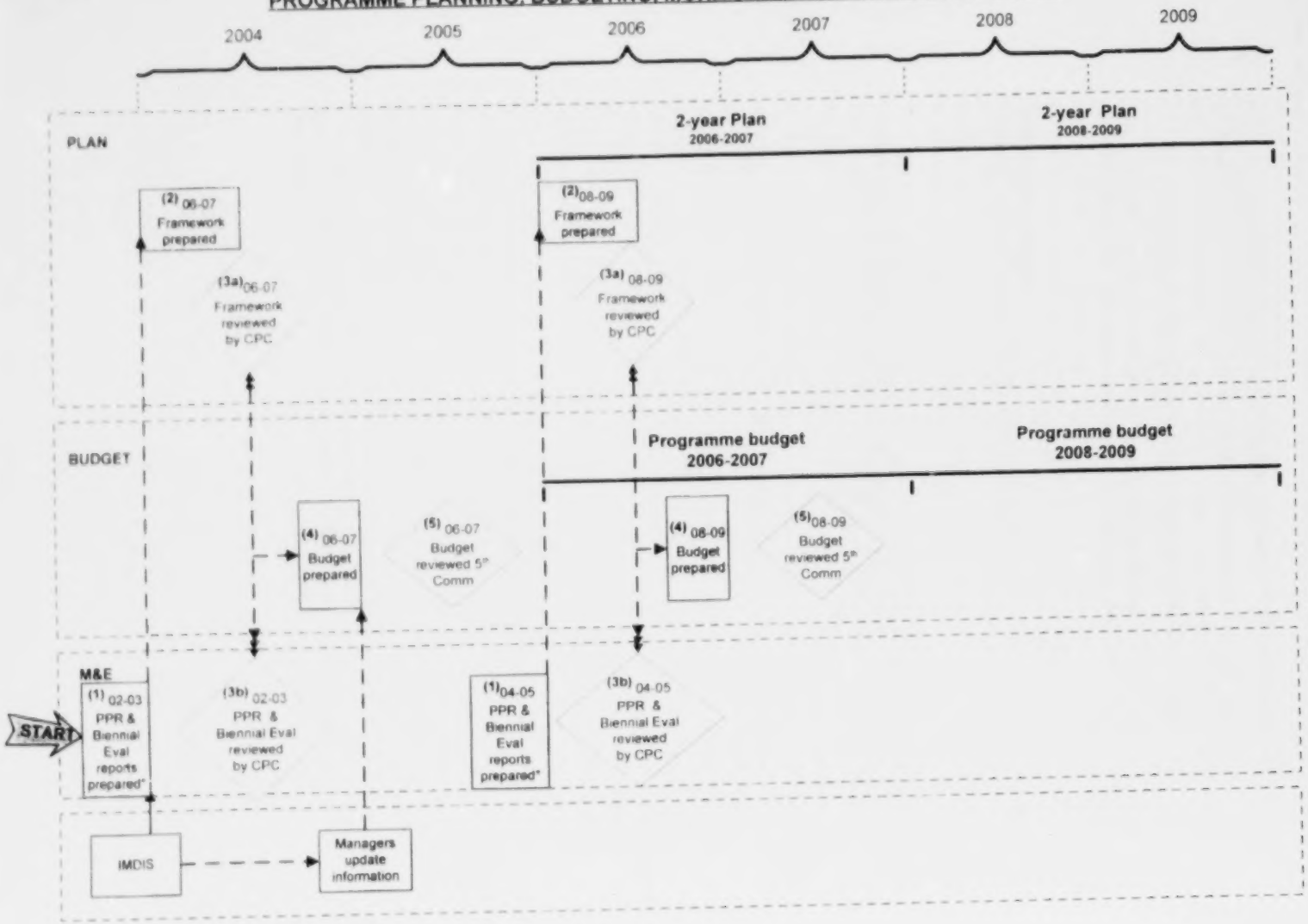
[7] See A/57/387.

[8] A/58/395.

[9] PPBME (ST/SGB/2000/8), rules 107.2 (b) (ii) and 107.3 (a).

ANNEX

PROGRAMME PLANNING, BUDGETING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION CYCLE



LABEL *1) PPR (Programme Performance Report)
2) Biennial Eval (Strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives)